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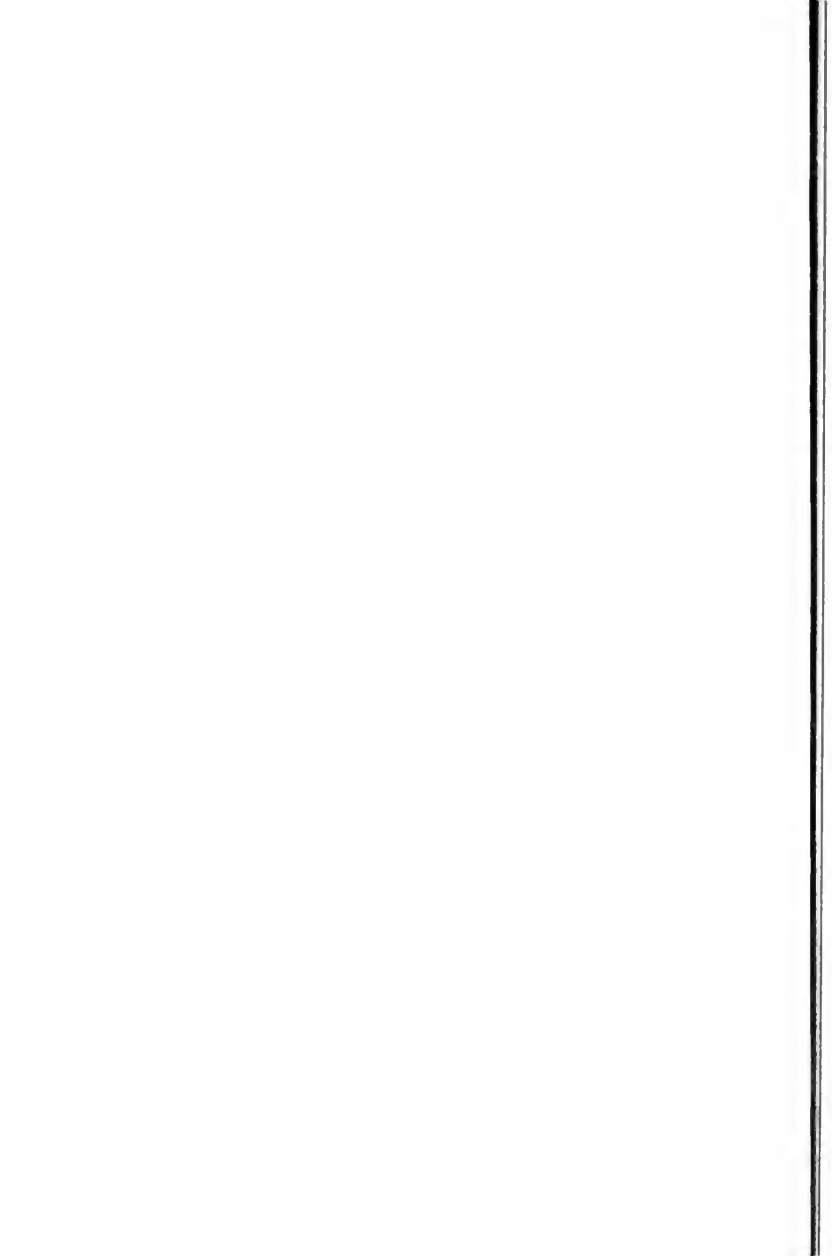
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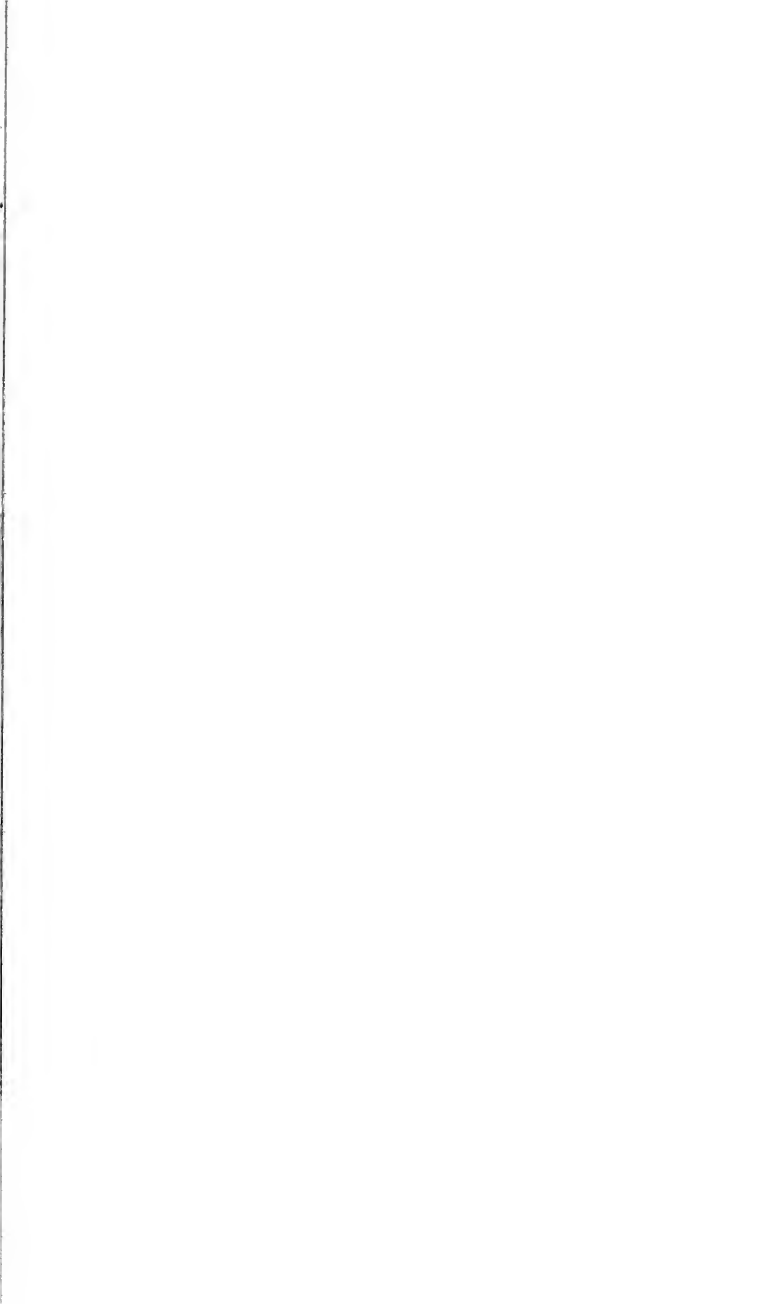


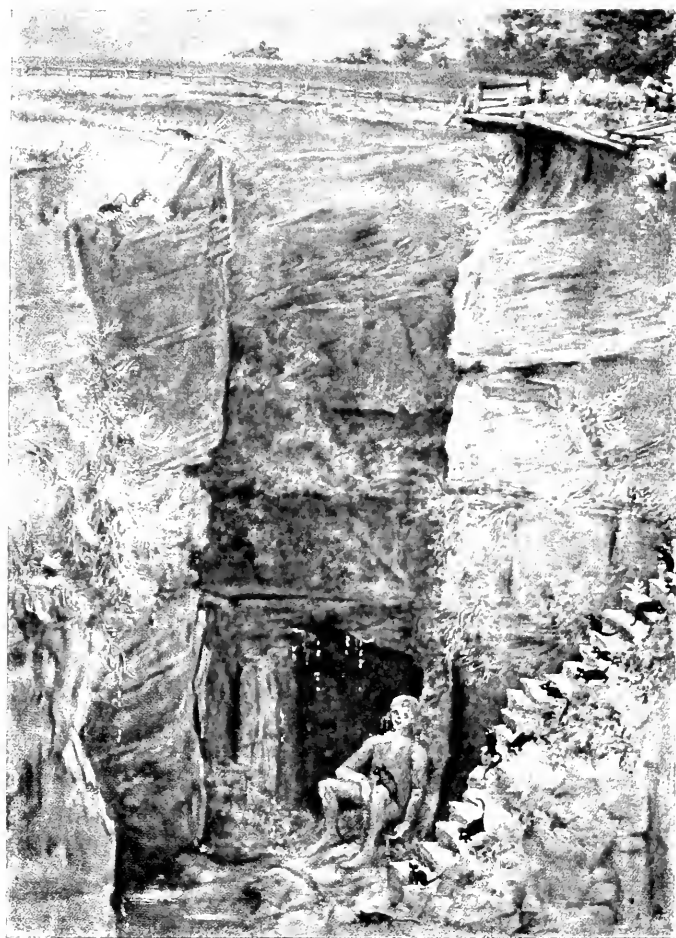
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SONGS OF CHILDHOOD





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**SONGS OF
CHILDHOOD**

By **WALTER DE LA MARE**
(WALTER RAMAL)

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

By **ESTELLA CANZIANI**

NEW EDITION

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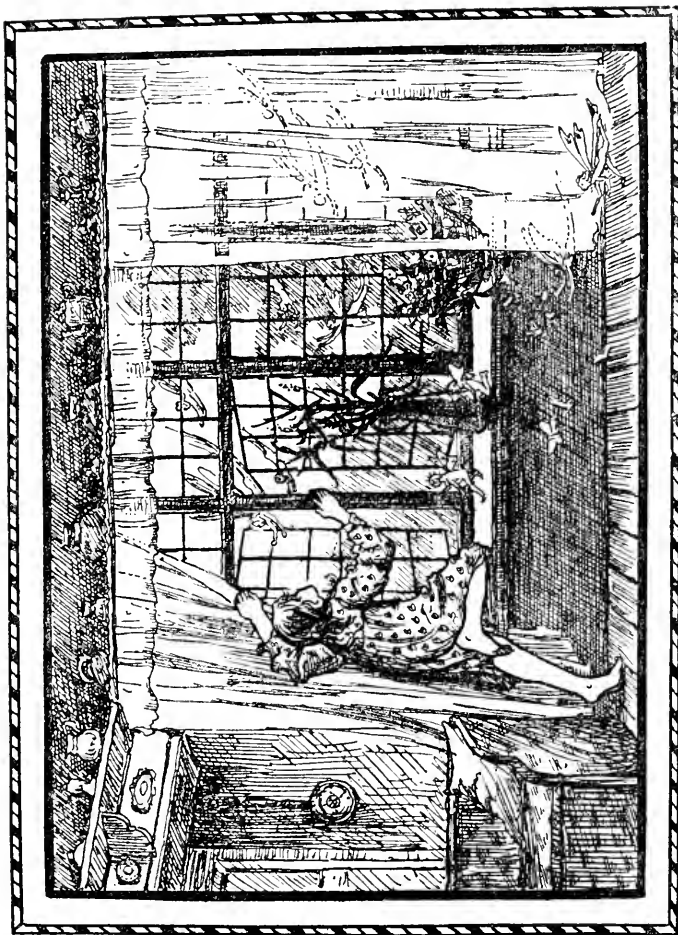
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SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

SLEEPYHEAD

As I lay awake in the white moonlight,
I heard a sweet singing in the wood,
 ‘ Out of bed,
 Sleepyhead,
Put your white foot now;
 Here are we,
 ’Neath the tree,
Singing round the root now.’

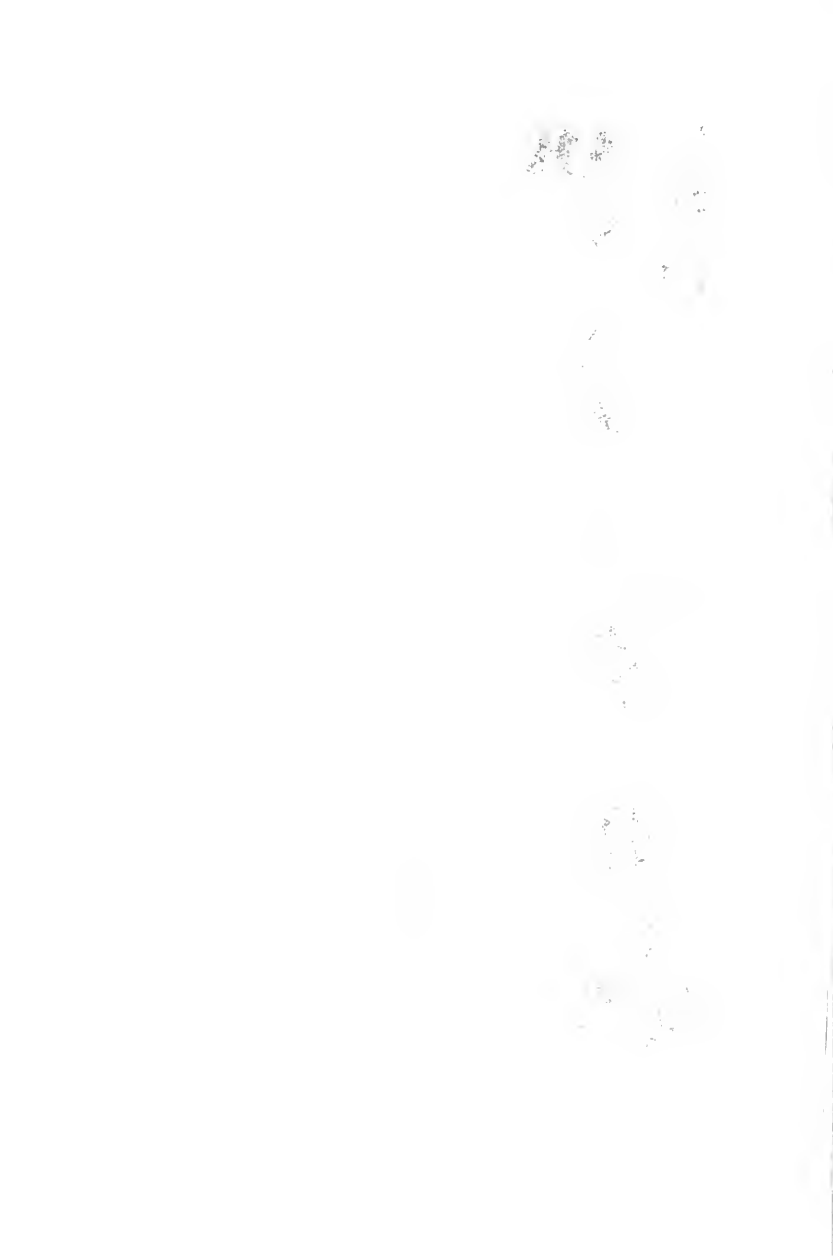
I looked out of window, in the white moon-
light,
The leaves were like snow in the wood—

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

‘ Come away,
Child, and play
Light with the gnomies ;
In a mound
Green and round—
That’s where their home is.
Honey-sweet
Curds to eat,
Cream and frumenty,
Shells and beads,
Poppy seeds,
You shall have plenty.’

But soon as I stooped in the dim moonlight
To put on my stocking and my shoe,
The sweet, sweet singing died sadly away,
And the light of the morning peeped through,
And instead of the gnomies there came a red
 robin
To sing of the buttercups and dew.





O DEAR ME !

Here are crocuses, white, gold, grey !
‘ O dear me ! ’ says Marjorie May ;
Flat as a platter the blackberry blows :

‘ O dear me ! ’ says Madeleine Rose ;
The leaves are fallen, the swallows flown :

‘ O dear me ! ’ says Humphrey John ;
Snow lies thick where all night it fell :

‘ O dear me ! ’ says Emmanuel.



BLUEBELLS

Where the bluebells and the wind are,
Fairies in a ring I spied,
And I heard a little linnet
Singing near beside.

Where the primrose and the dew are—
Soon were sped the fairies all :
Only now the green turf freshens,
And the linnets call.



LOVELOCKS

I watched the Lady Caroline
Bind up her dark and beauteous hair
Her face was rosy in the glass,
And, 'twixt the coils, her hands would pass,
White in the candleshine.

Her bottles on the table lay,
Stoppered, yet sweet of violet ;
Her image in the mirror stooped
To view those locks as lightly looped
As cherry boughs in May.

The snowy night lay dim without,
I heard the Waits their sweet song sing ;
The window smouldered keen with frost ;
Yet still she twisted, sleeked and tossed
Her beauteous hair about.



A-TISHOO

‘Sneeze, Pretty, sneeze, Dainty,
Else the Elves will have you sure;
Sneeze, Light-of-Seven-Bright-Candles,
See they’re tippeting at the door ;
Their wee feet in measure falling,
All their little voices calling,
Calling, calling, calling, calling—
Sneeze, or never come no more !’
‘A-tishoo !’

TARTARY



If I were Lord of Tartary,
Myself and me alone,
My bed should be of ivory,
Of beaten gold my throne ;
And in my court should peacocks flaunt,
And in my forests tigers haunt,
And in my pools great fishes slant
Their fins athwart the sun.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD



If I were Lord of Tartary,
Trumpeters every day
To every meal should summon me,
And in my courtyard bray ;
And in the evening lamps would shine,
Yellow as honey, red as wine,
While harp, and flute, and mandoline,
Made music sweet and gay.

TARTARY



If I were Lord of Tartary,
I'd wear a robe of beads,
White, and gold, and green they'd be—
And small and thick as seeds ;
And ere should wane the morning-star,
I'd don my robe and scimitar,
And zebras seven should draw my car
Through Tartary's dark glades.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD



Lord of the fruits of Tartary,
Her rivers silver-pale !
Lord of the hills of Tartary,
Glen, thicket, wood, and dale !
Her flashing stars, her scented breeze,
Her trembling lakes, like foamless seas,
Her bird-delighting citron-trees
In every purple vale !

THE BUCKLE

I had a silver buckle,
I sewed it on my shoe,
And 'neath a sprig of mistletoe
I danced the evening through.

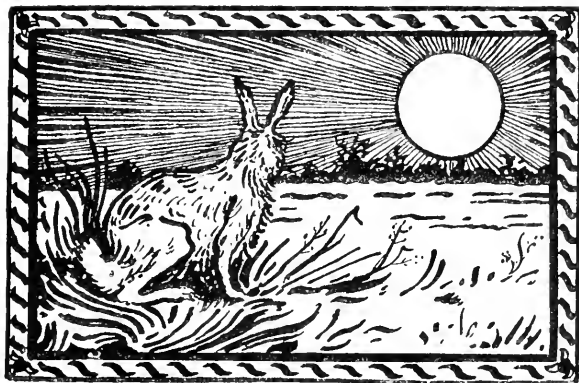
I had a bunch of cowslips,
I hid them in a grot,
In case the elves should come by night
And me remember not.

I had a yellow riband,
I tied it in my hair,
That, walking in the garden,
The birds might see it there.


SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

I had a secret laughter,
I laughed it near the wall :
Only the ivy and the wind
May tell of it at all.

THE HARE



I n the black furrow of a field
I saw an old witch-hare this night ;
And she cocked a lissome ear,
And she eyed the moon so bright,
And she nibbled of the green ;
And I whispered 'Wh-s-st ! witch-hare.'
Away like a ghostie o'er the field
She fled, and left the moonlight there.



BUNCHES OF GRAPES

‘ Bunches of grapes,’ says Timothy ;
‘ Pomegranates pink,’ says Elaine ;
‘ A junket of cream and a cranberry tart
For me,’ says Jane.

‘ Love-in-a-mist,’ says Timothy ;
‘ Primroses pale,’ says Elaine ;
‘ A nosegay of pinks and
mignonette
For me,’ says Jane.



SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

‘ Chariots of gold,’ says Timothy ;
‘ Silvery wings,’ says Elaine ;
‘ A bumpity ride in a wagon of hay
For me,’ says Jane.

JOHN MOULDY

I spied John Mouldy in his cellar,
Deep down twenty steps of stone ;
In the dusk he sat a-smiling,
Smiling there alone.

He read no book, he snuffed no candle ;
The rats ran in, the rats ran out ;
And far and near, the drip of water
Went whispering about.

The dusk was still, with dew a-falling,
I saw the Dog-star bleak and grim,
I saw a slim brown rat of Norway
Creep over him.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

I spied John Mouldy in his cellar,
Deep down twenty steps of stone ;
In the dusk he sat a-smiling,
Smiling there alone.



THE FLY

How large unto the tiny fly
Must little things appear !—
A rosebud like a feather bed,
Its prickle like a spear ;

A dewdrop like a looking-glass ;
A hair like golden wire ;
The smallest grain of mustard-seed
As fierce as coals of fire ;

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

A loaf of bread, a lofty hill ;
A wasp, a cruel leopard ;
And specks of salt as bright to see
As lambkins to a shepherd.



SONG

O for a moon to light me home !
O for a lanthorn green !
For those sweet stars the Pleiades,
That glitter in the darkling trees ;
O for a lovelorn taper ! O
For a lanthorn green !

O for a frock of tartan !
O for clear, wild, grey eyes !
For fingers light as violets,
'Neath branches that the blackbird frets ;
O for a thistly meadow ! O
For clear, wild, grey eyes !

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

O for a heart like almond boughs !

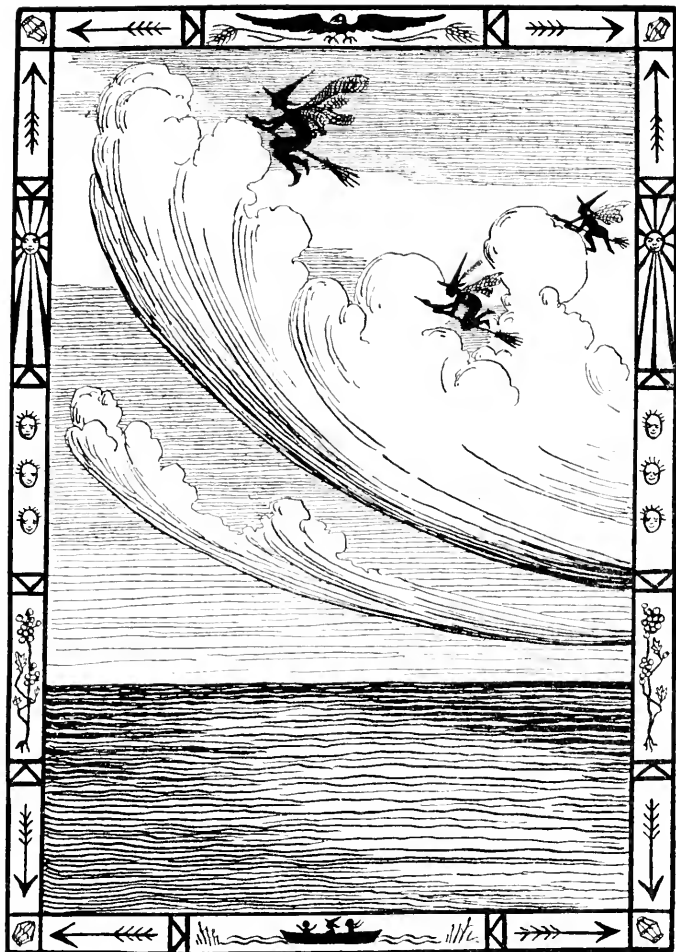
O for sweet thoughts like rain !

O for first-love like fields of grey

Shut April-buds at break of day !

O for a sleep like music !

Dreams—still as rain !



I SAW THREE WITCHES

I saw three witches
That bowed down like barley,
And straddled their brooms 'neath a louring
 sky,
And, mounting a storm-cloud,
Aloft on its margin,
Stood black in the silver as up they did fly.

I saw three witches
That mocked the poor sparrows
They carried in cages of wicker along,
Till a hawk from his eyrie
Swooped down like an arrow,
Smote on the cages, and ended their song.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

I saw three witches
That sailed in a shallop,
All turning their heads with a smickering
 smile,
Till a bank of green osiers
Concealed their grim faces,
Though I heard them lamenting for many a
 mile.

I saw three witches
Asleep in a valley,
Their heads in a row, like stones in a flood,
Till the moon, creeping upward,
Looked white through the valley,
And turned them to bushes in bright scarlet
 bud.

THE SILVER PENNY

‘Sailorman, I’ll give to you
My bright silver penny,
If out to sea you’ll sail me
And my dear sister Jenny.’

‘Get in, young sir, I’ll sail ye
And your dear sister Jenny,
But pay she shall her golden locks
Instead of your penny.’

They sail away, they sail away,
O fierce the winds blew !
The foam flew in clouds
And dark the night grew.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

And all the green sea-water climbed
Steep into the boat ;
Back to the shore again
Sail they will not.

Drowned is the sailorman,
Drowned is sweet Jenny,
And drowned in the deep sea
A bright silver penny.



THE RAINBOW

I saw the lovely arch
Of Rainbow span the sky,
The gold sun burning
As the rain swept by.

In bright-ringed solitude
The showery foliage shone
One lovely moment—
And the Bow was gone.

THE NIGHT-SWANS

' **T**is silence on the enchanted lake,
And silence in the air serene,
Save for the beating of her heart,
The lovely-eyed Evangeline.

She sings across the waters clear
And dark with trees and stars between,
The notes her fairy godmother
Taught her, the child Evangeline.

As might the unrippled pool reply,
Faltering an answer far and sweet,
Three swans as white as mountain snow
Swim mantling to her feet.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

And still upon the lake they stay,
Their eyes black stars in all their snow,
And softly, in the glassy pool,
Their feet beat darkly to and fro.

She rides upon her little boat,
Her swans swim through the starry sheen,
Rowing her into Fairyland—
The lovely-eyed Evangeline.

'Tis silence on the enchanted lake,
And silence in the air serene ;
Voices shall call in vain again
On earth the child Evangeline.

'Evangeline ! Evangeline !'
Upstairs, downstairs, all in vain.
Her room is dim ; her flowers faded ;
She answers not again.

REVERIE

When slim Sophia mounts her horse
And paces down the avenue,
It seems an inward melody
She paces to.

Each narrow hoof is lifted high
Beneath the dark enclustering pines,
A silver ray within his bit
And bridle shines.

His eye burns deep, his tail is arched,
And streams upon the shadowy air,
The daylight sleeks his jetty flanks,
His mistress's hair.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Her habit flows in darkness down,
 Upon the stirrup rests her foot,
Her brow is lifted, as if earth
 She heeded not.

'Tis silent in the avenue,
 The sombre pines are mute of song,
The blue is dark, there moves no breeze
 The boughs among.

When slim Sophia mounts her horse
 And paces down the avenue,
It seems an inward melody
 She paces to.



THE THREE BEGGARS

' **T**was autumn daybreak gold and wild,
While past St. Ann's grey tower they
shuffled,
Three beggars spied a fairy-child
In crimson mantle muffled.

The daybreak lighted up her face
All pink, and sharp, and emerald-eyed ;
She looked on them a little space,
And shrill as hautboy cried :—

' O three tall footsore men of rags
Which walking this gold morn I see,
What will ye give me from your bags
For fairy kisses three ? '

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

The first, that was a reddish man,
Out of his bundle takes a crust :
' La, by the tombstones of St. Ann,
There's fec, if fee ye must ! '

The second, that was a chesnut man,
Out of his bundle draws a bone :
' La, by the belfry of St. Ann,
And all my breakfast gone ! '

The third, that was a yellow man,
Out of his bundle picks a groat,
' La, by the Angel of St. Ann,
And I must go without.'

That changeling, lean and icy-lipped,
Touched crust, and bone, and groat, and lo!
Beneath her finger taper-tipped
The magic all ran through.

THE THREE BEGGARS

Instead of crust a peacock pie,
 Instead of bone sweet venison,
Instead of groat a white lily
 With seven blooms thereon.

And each fair cup was deep with wine :
 Such was the changeling's charity,
The sweet feast was enough for nine,
 But not too much for three.

O toothsome meat in jelly froze !
 O tender haunch of elfin stag !
O rich the odour that arose !
 O plump with scraps each bag !

There, in the daybreak gold and wild,
 Each merry-hearted beggar man
Drank deep unto the fairy child,
 And blessed the good St. Ann.

ALULVAN

The sun is clear of bird and cloud,
The grass shines windless, grey and still,
In dusky ruin the owl dreams on,
The cuckoo echoes on the hill ;
Yet soft along Alulvan's walks
The ghost at noonday stalks.

His eyes in shadow of his hat
Stare on the ruins of his house ;
His cloak, up-fastened with a brooch,
Of faded velvet grey as mouse,
Brushes the roses as he goes :
Yet wavers not one rose.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

The wild birds in a cloud fly up
From their sweet feeding in the fruit ;
The droning of the bees and flies
Rises gradual as a lute ;
Is it for fear the birds are flown,
And shrills the insect-drone ?

Thick is the ivy o'er Alulvan,
And crisp with summer-heat its turf ;
Far, far across its empty pastures
Alulvan's sands are white with surf :
And he himself is grey as sea,
Watching beneath an elder-tree.

All night the fretful, shrill Banshee
Lurks in the ivy's dark festoons,
Calling for ever, o'er garden and river,
Through magpie changing of the moons :
'Alulvan, O, alas ! Alulvan,
The doom of lone Alulvan !'

THE PEDLAR

There came a Pedlar to an evening house ;
Sweet Lettice, from her lattice looking
down,

Wondered what man he was, so curious
His black hair dangled on his tattered gown :
Then lifts he up his face, with glittering
eyes :—

‘ What will you buy, sweetheart ?—Here’s
honeycomb,

And mottled pippins, and sweet mulberry
pies,

Comfits and peaches, snowy cherry bloom,

To keep in water for to make night sweet :

All that you want, sweetheart—come, taste
and eat ! ’

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Mocking, yet winsome, knelled that low voice
on,

And Lettice looked and listened, sighed and
smiled ;

Her eyes with lustre lit, her round cheek wan,
Her small heart beating, by such wares be-
guiled.

Yet in that same small heart a whisper went—
‘ Heed not the Stranger and his sugared song!
Only on evil are such pedlars bent :

His sweets are death.’ Yet, still how she
doth long

But just to taste, then shut the lattice tight,
And hide her eyes from the delicious sight !

‘ What must I pay ? ’ she whispered. ‘ Pay ! ’
says he,

‘ Pedlar I am who through this wood do roam,
One lock of hair is gold enough for me,

For apple, peach, comfit, or honeycomb ! ’

But from her bough a drowsy squirrel cried,

THE PEDLAR

‘Trust him not, Lettice, trust, oh trust him
not !’

And many another woodland tongue beside
Rose softly in the silence—‘Trust him not !’
Then cried the Pedlar in a bitter voice,
‘What, in the thicket, is this idle noise ?’

A late, harsh blackbird smote him with her
wings,
As through the glade, dark in the dim, she
flew ;
Yet still the Pedlar his old burden sings—
‘What, pretty sweetheart, shall I show to
you ?
Here’s orange ribands, here’s a string of
pearls,
Here’s silk of buttercup and pansy glove,
A pin of tortoiseshell for windy curls,
A box of silver, scented sweet with clove :
Come now,’ he says, with dim and lifted face,
‘I pass not often such a lonely place.’

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

‘ Pluck not a hair ! ’ a hidden rabbit cried,
‘ With but one hair he’ll steal thy heart away,
Then only sorrow shall thy lattice hide :
Go in ! all honest pedlars come by day.’
There was dead silence in the drowsy wood ;
‘ Here’s syrup for to lull sweet maids to sleep ;
And bells for dreams, and fairy wine and food
All day thy heart in happiness to keep . . .’
And now she takes the scissors on her
thumb—
‘ O, then, no more unto my lattice come ! ’

Sad is the sound of weeping in the wood !
Now only night is where the pedlar was ;
And bleak as frost upon a quickling bud
His magic steals in darkness, O alas !
Why all the summer doth sweet Lettice pine ?
And, ere the wheat is ripe, why lies her gold
Hid ’neath fresh new-pluckt sprigs of eglantine ?
Why all the morning hath the cuckoo tolled,

THE PEDLAR

Sad to and fro in green and secret ways,
With solemn bells the burden of his days ?

And, in the market-place, what man is this
Who wears a loop of gold upon his breast,
Stuck heartwise ; and whose glassy flatteries
Take all the townsfolk ere they go to rest
Who come to buy and gossip ? Doth his eye
Remember a face lovely in a wood ?

O people ! hasten, hasten, do not buy
His woeful wares ; the bird of grief doth
brood

There where his heart should be ; and far
away

Dew lies on grave-flowers this self-same day.

THE GREY WOLF

‘**A** fagot, a fagot, go fetch for the fire, son !’
‘O, Mother, the wolf looks in at the door !’
‘Cry Shoo ! now, cry Shoo ! thou fierce grey
wolf fly, now ;
Haste thee away, he will fright thee no more.’

‘I ran, O, I ran, but the grey wolf ran faster,
O, Mother, I cry in the air at thy door,
Cry Shoo ! now, cry Shoo ! but his fangs
were so cruel,
Thy son (save his hatchet) thou’lt never
see more.’

DAME HICKORY

‘**D**ame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
Here’s sticks for your fire,
Furze-twigs, and oak-twigs,
And beech-twigs, and briar !’
But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,
She found ’twas the voice of the False Faerie.

‘ Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
Here’s meat for your broth,
Goose-flesh, and hare’s flesh,
And pig’s trotters both !’
But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,
She found ’twas the voice of the False Faerie.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

‘ Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
Here’s a wolf at your door,
His teeth grinning white,
And his tongue wagging sore ! ’
‘ Nay ! ’ said Dame Hickory, ‘ ye False Faerie ! ’
But a wolf ’twas indeed, and famished was he.

‘ Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
Here’s buds for your tomb,
Bramble, and lavender,
And rosemary bloom ! ’
‘ Wh-s-st ! ’ said Dame Hickory, ‘ ye False
Faerie,
Ye cry like a wolf, ye do, and trouble poor me.’



THE FAIRIES DANCING

I heard along the early hills,
Ere yet the lark was risen up,
Ere yet the dawn with firelight fills
The night-dew of the bramble-cup,—
I heard the fairies in a ring
Sing as they tripped a lilting round
Soft as the moon, on wavering wing.
The starlight shook as if with sound,
As if with echoing, and the stars
Prankt their bright eyes with trembling
gleams ;
While red with war the gusty Mars
Rained upon earth his ruddy beams.

He shone alone, low down the West,
While I, behind a hawthorn-bush,

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Watched on the fairies flaxen-tressed
The fires of the morning flush.
Till, as a mist, their beauty died,
Their singing shrill and fainter grew ;
And daylight tremulous and wide
Flooded the moorland through and through ;
Till Urdon's copper weathercock
Was reared in golden flame afar,
And dim from moonlit dreams awoke
The towers and groves of Arroar.

THE MILLER AND HIS SON

A twangling harp for Mary,
A silvery flute for John,
And now we'll play the livelong day,
‘The Miller and his Son.’ . . .

‘The Miller went a-walking
All in the forest high,
He sees three doves a-flitting
Against the dark blue sky :

‘Says he, “My son, now follow
These doves so white and free
That cry above the forest,
And surely cry to thee.”

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

“ I go, my dearest Father,
But O ! I sadly fear,
These doves so white will lead me far,
But never bring me near.”

‘ He kisses the Miller,
He cries, “Awhoop to ye !”
And straightway through the forest
Follows the wood-doves three.

‘ There came a sound of weeping
To the Miller in his Mill ;
Red roses in a thicket
Bloomed over near his wheel ;

‘ Three stars shone wild and brightly
Above the forest dim :
But never his dearest son
Returns again to him.

THE MILLER AND HIS SON

‘ The cuckoo shall call “ Cuckoo ! ”

In vain along the vale,
The linnet, and the blackbird,
The mournful nightingale ;

‘ The Miller hears and sees not—

Sits thinking of his son ;
His toppling wheel is silent ;
His grinding done.

‘ “ O doves so white,” he weepeth,

“ O roses on the tree,
O stars that shine so brightly,
You shine in vain for me !

‘ “ I bade him follow, follow !

He said, ‘ O Father dear,
These doves so white will lead me far
But never bring me near.’ ” . . .

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

A twangling harp for Mary,
A silvery flute for John,
And now we'll play the livelong day,
‘The Miller and his Son.’



THE OGRE

'**T**is moonlight on Trebarwith Vale,
And moonlight on an Ogre keen,
Who, prowling hungry through the dale
A lone cottage hath seen.

Small, with thin smoke ascending up,
Three casements and a door :
The Ogre eager is to sup,
And here seems dainty store.

Sweet as a larder to a mouse,
So to him staring down,
Seemed the small-windowed moonlit house,
With jasmine overgrown.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

He snorted, as the billows snort
In darkness of the night,
Betwixt his lean locks tawny-swart,
He glowered on the sight.

Into the garden, sweet with peas,
He put his wooden shoe,
And bending back the apple trees
Crept covetously through ;

Then, stooping, with a gloating eye
Stared through the lattice small,
And spied two children which did lie
Asleep, against the wall.

Into their dreams no shadow fell
Of his disastrous thumb
Groping discreet, and gradual,
Across the quiet room.

THE OGRE

But scarce his nail had scraped the cot
Wherein these children lay,
As if his malice were forgot,
It suddenly did stay.

For faintly in the ingle-nook,
He heard a cradle song,
That rose into his thoughts and woke
Terror them among.

For she who in the kitchen sat
Darning by the fire,
Guileless of what he would be at,
Sang sweet as wind or wire :—

‘ Lullay, thou little tiny child,
By-by, lullay, lullie ;
Jesu in glory, meek and mild,
This night remember thee !

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

‘ Fiend, witch, and goblin, foul and wild,
He deems them smoke to be ;
Lullay, thou little tiny child,
By-by, lullay, lullie ! ’

The Ogre lifted up his eyes
Into the moon’s pale ray,
And gazed upon her leopard-wise,
Cruel and clear as day ;

He snarled in gluttony and fear :
The wind blows dismally—
‘ Jesu in storm my lambs be near,
By-by, lullay, lullie ! ’

And like a ravenous beast which sees
The hunter’s icy eye,
So did this wretch in wrath confess
Sweet Jesu’s mastery.

THE OGRE

With gaunt locks dangling crouched he, then—
Drew backward from his prey,
Through tangled apple-boughs again
He wrenched and rent his way.

He lightly drew his greedy thumb
From out that casement pale,
And strode, enormous, swiftly home,
Whinnying down the dale.

THE GAGE

‘**L**ady Jane, O Lady Jane !
Your hound hath broken bounds again,
And chased my timorous deer, O ;
If him I see,
That hour he’ll dee ;
My brakes shall be his bier, O.’

‘Hoots ! lord, speak not so proud to me !
My hound, I trow, is fleet and free,
He’s welcome to your deer, O ;
Shoot, shoot you may,
He’ll gang his way,
Your threats we nothing fear, O.’

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

He's fetched him in, he's laid him low,
Drips his lifeblood red and slow,
Darkens his dreary eye, O ;
 ' Here is your beast,
 And now at least
My herds in peace shall lie, O.'

“ In peace ! ” my lord, Nay, mark me well !
For what my jolly hound befell
 You shall sup twenty-fold, O !
 For every tooth
 Of his, i'sooth,
A stag in pawn I hold, O.

' Huntsman and horn, huntsman and horn,
Shall scour your heaths and coverts lorn,
 Braying 'em shrill and clear, O ;
 But lone and still
 Shall lift each hill,
Each valley wan and sere, O.

THE GAGE

‘ Ride up you may, ride down you may,
Lonely or trooped, by night or day,
My hound shall haunt you ever :
Bird, beast, and game
Shall dread the same,
The wild fish of your river.’

Her cheek burns angry as the rose,
Her eye with wrath and pity flows :
He gazes fierce and round, O,—
‘ Dear Lord ! ’ he says,
‘ What loveliness
To waste upon a hound, O.

‘ I’d give my stags, my hills and dales,
My stormcocks and my nightingales
To have undone this deed, O ;
For deep beneath
My heart is death
Which for her love doth bleed, O.’

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

He wanders up, he wanders down,
On foot, a-horse, by night and noon :
His lands are bleak and drear, O ;
Forsook his dales
Of nightingales,
Forsook his moors of deer, O.

Forsook his heart, ah me ! of mirth ;
There's nothing lightsome left on earth :
All happy dreams seem vain, O,
Save where remote
The moonbeams gloat,
And sleeps the lovely Jane, O.

Until an even when lone he went,
Gnawing his beard in dreariment—
Lo ! from a thicket hidden,
Lovely as flower
In April hour,
Steps forth a form unbidden.

THE GAGE

‘ Get ye now down, my lord, to me !

I’m troubled so I’m like to dee,’

She cries, ’twixt joy and grief, O ;

‘ The hound is dead,

When all is said,

But love is past belief, O.

‘ Nights, nights I’ve lain your lands to see,

Forlorn and still—and all for me,

All for a foolish curse, O ;

Now here am I

Come out to die—

To live unloved is worse, O ! ’

In faith, this lord, in that lone dale,

Hears now a sweeter nightingale,

And lairs a tenderer deer, O ;

His sorrow goes

Like mountain snows

In waters sweet and clear, O !

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

And now, what hound is this that fleet
Comes fawning to his mistress' feet.

And courses round his master ?

How swiftly love

May grief remove,

How happy make disaster !

Now here he smells, now there he smells,
Winding his voice along the dells

Till grey flows up the morn, O ;

Then hies again

To Lady Jane

No longer now forlorn, O.

Ay, even as happy buds do break
To life and light for sunshine's sake,

So she in beauty moving

Rides at his hand

Across his land,

Beloved as well as loving.



THE DWARF

‘**N**ow, Jinnie, my dear, to the dwarf be off,
That lives in Barberry Wood,
And fetch me some honey, but be sure you
don’t laugh,—
He hates little girls that are rude, are rude,
He hates little girls that are rude.’

Jane tapped at the door of the house in the
wood,
And the dwarf looked over the wall,
He eyed her so queer, ’twas as much as she
could
To keep from laughing at all, at all,
To keep from laughing at all.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

His shoes down the passage came clod, clod,
clod,

And when he opened the door,
He croaked so harsh, 'twas as much as she
could

To keep from laughing the more, the more,
To keep from laughing the more.

As there, with his bushy red beard, he stood,
Pricked out to double its size,
He squinted so cross, 'twas as much as she
could

To keep the tears out of her eyes, her eyes,
To keep the tears out of her eyes.

He slammed the door, and went clod, clod,
clod,

But while in the porch she bides,
He squealed so fierce, 'twas as much as she
could

To keep from cracking her sides, her sides,
To keep from cracking her sides.

THE DWARF

He threw a pumpkin over the wall,
And melons and apples beside,
So thick in the air that to see them all fall,
She laughed, and laughed, till she cried,
cried, cried,
Jane laughed and laughed till she cried.

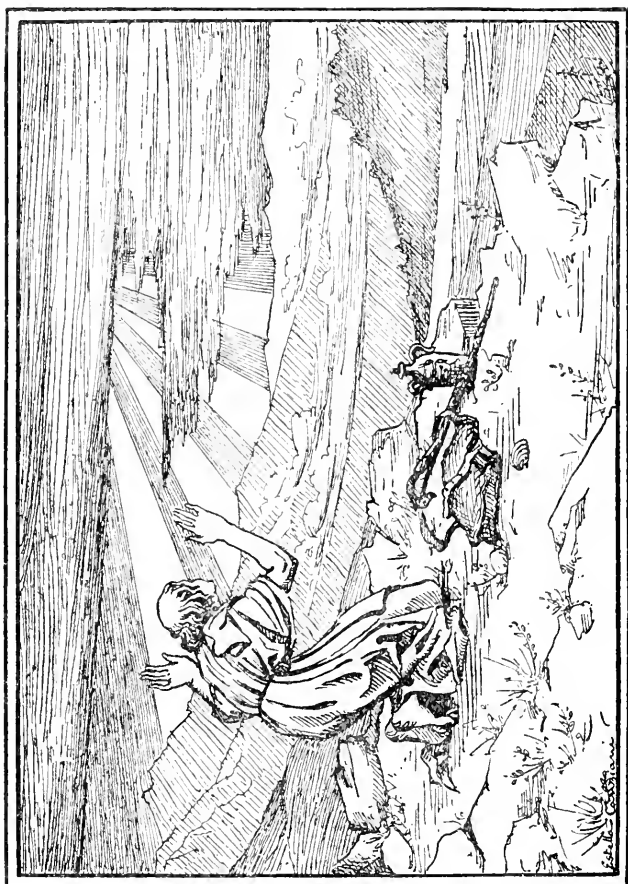
Down fell her teardrops a pit-a-pat-pat,
And red as a rose she grew :—
'Kah ! kah !' said the dwarf, 'is it crying
you're at ?
It's the very worst thing you could do, do,
do,
It's the very worst thing you could do.'

He slipped like a monkey up into a tree,
He shook her down cherries like rain ;
'See now,' says he, cheeping, 'a blackbird I be,
Laugh, laugh, little Jinnie, again-gain-gain,
Laugh, laugh, little Jinnie, again.'

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Ah me ! what a strange, what a gladsome duet
From a house in the deeps of a wood !
Such shrill and such harsh voices never met
yet
A-laughing as loud as they could, could,
could,
A-laughing as loud as they could.

Come Jinnie, come dwarf, cocksparrow, and
bee,
There's a ring gaudy-green in the dell,
Sing, sing, ye sweet cherubs, that flit in the
tree ;
La ! who can draw tears from a well, well,
well,
Who ever drew tears from a well !



THE PILGRIM

‘**S**hall we carry now your bundle,
You old grey man ?
Over hill and over meadow
Lighter than an owlet’s shadow
We will whirl it through the air,
Through blue regions shrill and bare,
So you may in comfort fare—
Shall we carry now your bundle,
You old grey man ? ’

The Pilgrim lifted up his eyes
And saw three fiends in the skies,
Stooping o’er that lonely place
Evil in form and face.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

‘Nay,’ he answered, ‘leave me, leave me—

Ye three wild fiends !

Far it is my feet must wander ;

And my city lieth yonder ;

I must bear my bundle alone

Till the day be done.’

The fiends stared down with leaden eye,

Fanning the chill air duskily,

’Twixt their hoods they stoop and cry :—

‘ Shall we smooth the path before you,

You old grey man ?

Sprinkle it green with gilded showers,

Strew it o’er with painted flowers ;

Shall we blow sweet airs on it,

Lure bright birds to sing and flit ;

Shall we smooth the path before you,

You old grey man ? ’

THE PILGRIM

' O, 'tis better silence,
 Ye three wild fiends !
I am footsore, faint and weary—
Dark the way, forlorn and dreary—
Beaten of wind, torn of briar,
Smitten of rain, parched with fire—
But 'tis better silence,
 Ye three wild fiends ! '

It seemed a cloud obscured the air,
Lightning quivered in the gloom,
And a faint voice of thunder spake
Far in the lone hill-hollows—' Come ! '
Then, half in fury, half in dread,
The fiends drew closer down, and said :

' Nay, thou foolish fond old man,
 Hearken awhile !
Frozen, scorched, with ice and heat !
Tarry now, sit down and eat.
Juice of purple grape shall be
Youth and solace unto thee.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Music of tambour, wire and wind,
Ease shall bring to heart and mind ;
Wonderful sweet mouths shall sigh
Languishing and lullaby ;
Rest, then, lest this night you die,
Stubborn old man.'

The Pilgrim crouches terrified
At stooping hood, and glassy face,
Gloating, evil, side by side,
Terror and hate brood o'er the place ;
He flings his withered hands on high
With a bitter, breaking cry :—
' Pity have, and leave me, leave me,
Ye three wild fiends !
If I lay me down in slumber,
Then I lay me down in wrath.
If I stir not in dark dreaming,
Then I wither in my path.
If I hear sweet voices singing,

THE PILGRIM

'Tis a demon's lullaby ;
And in hideous storm of terror
I wake but to die.'

And even as he spake, on high
Arrows of sunlight pierced the sky.
Bright streamed the rain. O'er burning snow
From hill to hill a wondrous bow
Of colour and fire trembled in air,
Painting its heavenly beauty there.

Wild flapped each fiend a batlike hood
'Gainst that affrighting light, and stood
Beating the windless rain, and then
Rose heavy and slow with cowering head,
Circled in company again,
And into darkness fled.

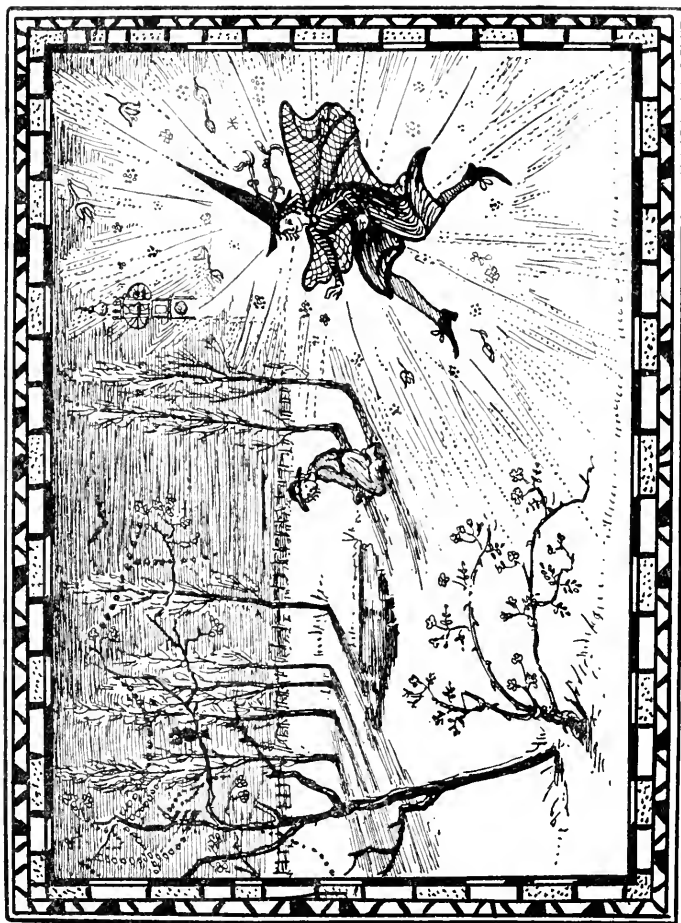
Marvellous sweet it was to hear
The waters gushing loud and clear ;
Marvellous happy it was to be
Alone, and yet not solitary ;
Oh, out of terror and dark to come
In sight of home !

THE FIDDLERS

Nine feat Fiddlers had good Queen Bess
To play her music as she did dress.
Behind an arras of horse and hound
They sate there scraping delightful sound.
Spangled, bejewelled, her skirts would she
Draw o'er a petticoat of cramasie ;
And soft each string like a bird would sing
In the starry dusk of evening.
Then slow from the deeps the crisscross
bows,
Crooning like doves, arose and arose.
And when, like a cage, her ladies did raise
A stiff rich splendour o'er her ribbed stays,
Like bumbling bees those four times nine
Fingers in melodies loud did pine ;

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Till came her coif and her violet shoon
And her virgin face shone out like the moon :
Oh, then in a rapture those three times three
Fiddlers squealed shrill on their topmost C.



AS LUCY WENT A-WALKING

As Lucy went a-walking one morning
cold and fine,

There sate three crows upon a bough, and
three times three is nine :

Then ' O ! ' said Lucy, in the snow, ' it's very
plain to see

A witch has been a-walking in the fields in
front of me.'

Then stept she light and heedfully across the
frozen snow,

And plucked a bunch of elder-twigs that near
a pool did grow :

And, by and by, she comes to seven shadows
in one place

Stretched black by seven poplar-trees against
the sun's bright face.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

She looks to left, she looks to right, and in
the midst she sees
A little pool of water clear and frozen 'neath
the trees ;
Then down beside its margent in the crusty
snow she kneels,
And hears a magic belfry a-ringing with
sweet bells.

Clear sang the faint far merry peal, then
silence on the air,
And icy-still the frozen pool and poplars
standing there :
Then lo ! as Lucy turned her head and
looked along the snow
She sees a witch—a witch she sees, come
frisking to and fro.

Her scarlet, buckled shoes they clicked, her
heels a-twinkling high ;
With mistletoe her steeple-hat bobbed as she
capered by ;

AS LUCY WENT A-WALKING

But never a dint, or mark, or print, in the
whiteness for to see,
Though danced she light, though danced she
fast, though danced she lissomely.

It seemed 'twas diamonds in the air, or little
flakes of frost ;
It seemed 'twas golden smoke around, or sun-
beams lightly tost ;
It seemed an elfin music like to reeds and
warblers rose :
'Nay !' Lucy said, 'it is the wind that
through the branches flows.'

And as she peeps, and as she peeps, 'tis no
more one, but three,
And eye of bat, and downy wing of owl
within the tree,
And the bells of that sweet belfry a-pealing
as before,
And now it is not three she sees, and now it
is not four.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

‘ O ! who are ye,’ sweet Lucy cries, ‘ that in
a dreadful ring,
All muffled up in brindled shawls, do caper,
frisk, and spring ? ’
‘ A witch and witches, one and nine,’ they
straight to her reply,
And looked upon her narrowly, with green
and needle eye.

Then Lucy sees in clouds of gold sweet cherry
trees upgrow,
And bushes of red roses that bloomed above
the snow ;
She smells, all faint, the almond-boughs, blowing
so wild and fair,
And doves with milky eyes ascend fluttering
in the air.

Clear flowers she sees, like tulip buds, go
floating by like birds,
With wavering tips that warbled sweetly
strange enchanted words ;

AS LUCY WENT A-WALKING

And, as with ropes of amethyst, the twigs with
lamps were hung,
And clusters of green emeralds like fruit upon
them clung.

‘ O witches nine, ye dreadful nine, O witches
seven and three !

Whence come these wondrous things that I
this Christmas morning see ? ’

But straight, as in a clap, when she of *Christ-*
mas says the word,

Here is the snow, and there the sun, but never
bloom nor bird ;

Nor warbling flame, nor gloaming-rope of
amethyst there shows,

Nor bunches of green emeralds, nor belfry,
well, and rose,

Nor cloud of gold, nor cherry-tree, nor witch
in brindled shawl,

But like a dream that vanishes, so vanished
were they all.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

When Lucy sees, and only sees three crows
 upon a bough,
And earthly twigs, and bushes hidden white
 in driven snow,
Then 'O !' said Lucy, 'three times three is
 nine—I plainly see
Some witch has been a-walking in the fields
 in front of me.'



DOWN-ADOWN-DERRY

Down-adown-derry,
Sweet Annie Maroon,
Gathering daisies
In the meadows of Doone,
Sees a white fairy
Skip buxom and free,
Where the waters go brawling
In rills to the sea ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Sweet Annie Maroon,
Through the green grasses
Peeps softly ; and soon
Spies under green willows

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

A fairy whose song
Like the smallest of bubbles
Floats bobbing along ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Her cheeks were like wine,
Her eyes in her wee face
Like water-sparks shine,
Her niminy fingers
Her sleek tresses preen,
The which in the combing
She peeps out between ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Shrill, shrill was her tune :—
' Come to my water-house,
Annie Maroon,
Come in your dimity,

D O W N - A D O W N - D E R R Y

Ribbon on head,
To wear siller seaweed
And coral instead ' ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Lean fish of the sea,
Bring lanthorns for feasting
The gay Faërie ;
'Tis sand for the dancing,
A music all sweet
In the water-green gloaming
For thistledown feet ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Sweet Annie Maroon
Looked large on the fairy
Curled wan as the moon ;
And all the grey ripples

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

To the Mill racing by,
With harps and with timbrels
Did ringing reply ;
 Singing down-adown-derry.

‘ Down-adown-derry,’
Sang the Fairy of Doone,
Piercing the heart
Of sweet Annie Maroon ;
And lo ! when like roses
The clouds of the sun
Faded at dusk, gone
Was Annie Maroon ;
 Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
The daisies are few ;
Frost twinkles powdery
In haunts of the dew ;
And only the robin

D O W N - A D O W N - D E R R Y

Perched on a thorn,
Can comfort the heart
Of a father forlorn ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
There's snow in the air ;
Ice where the lily
Bloomed waxen and fair ;
He may call o'er the water,
Cry—cry through the Mill,
But Annie Maroon, alas !
Answer ne'er will ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

THE ENGLISHMAN

I met a sailor in the woods,
A silver ring wore he,
His hair hung black, his eyes shone blue,
And thus he said to me :—

‘ What country, say, of this round earth,
What shore of what salt sea,
Be this, my son, I wander in,
And looks so strange to me ? ’

Says I, ‘ O foreign sailorman,
In England now you be,
This is her wood, and there her sky,
And that her roaring sea.’

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

He lifts his voice yet louder,
 ‘What smell be this,’ says he,
‘My nose on the sharp morning air
 Snuffs up so greedily?’

Says I, ‘It is wild roses
 Do smell so winsomely,
And winy briar too,’ says I,
 ‘That in these thickets be.’

‘And oh!’ says he, ‘what leetle bird
 Is singing in yon high tree,
So every shrill and long-drawn note
 Like bubbles breaks in me?’

Says I, ‘It is the mavis
 That perches in the tree,
And sings so shrill, and sings so sweet
 When dawn comes up the sea.’

THE ENGLISHMAN

At which he fell a-musing,
And fixed his eye on me,
As one alone 'twixt light and dark
A spirit thinks to see.

' England ! ' he whispers soft and harsh,
' England ! ' repeated he,
' And briar, and rose, and mavis,
A-singing in yon high tree.

' Ye speak me true, my leetle son,
So—so, it came to me,
A-drifting landwards on a spar,
And grey dawn on the sea.

' Ay, ay, I could not be mistook ;
I knew them leafy trees,
I knew that land so witchery sweet,
And that old noise of seas.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

‘ Though here I’ve sailed a score of years,
And heard ’em, dream or wake,
Lap small and hollow ’gainst my cheek,
On sand and coral break ;

“ Yet now,” my leetle son, says I,
A-drifting on the wave,
“ That land I see so safe and green
Is England, I believe.

“ And that there wood is English wood,
And this here cruel sea,
The selfsame old blue ocean
Years gone remembers me,

“ A-sitting with my bread and butter
Down ahind yon chitterin’ mill ;
And this same Marinere ”—(that’s me),
“ Is that same leetle Will !—

THE ENGLISHMAN

“ That very same wee leetle Will
Eating his bread and butter there,
And looking on the broad blue sea
Betwixt his yaller hair ! ”

‘ And here be I, my son, throwed up
Like corpses from the sea,
Ships, stars, winds, tempests, pirates past,
Yet leetle Will I be ! ’

He said no more, that sailorman,
But in a reverie
Stared like the figure of a ship
With painted eyes to sea.

THE PHANTOM

‘ **U**pstairs in the large closet, child,
This side the blue room door,
Is an old Bible, bound in leather,
Standing upon the floor.

‘ Go with this taper, bring it me ;
Carry it—so—upon your arm ;
It is the book on many a sea
Hath stilled the wave’s alarm.

Late the hour, dark the night,
The house is solitary ;
Feeble is a taper’s light,
To light poor Ann to see.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Her eyes are yet with visions bright
Of sylph and river, flower and fay,
Now through a narrow corridor
She goes her lonely way.

Vast shadows on the heedless walls
Gigantic loom, stoop low ;
Each little hasty footfall calls
Hollowly to and fro.

Now in the dark clear glass there moves
A taper, mocking hers—
A phantom face of light blue eyes
Reflecting phantom fears.

Around her loom the vacant room
Wind the upward stairs,
She climbs on into a loneliness
Only her taper shares.

THE PHANTOM

From out the dark a cold wind stirs,
At every window sighs ;
A waning moon peers small and chill
From out the cloudy skies,

Casting faint tracery on the walls ;
So stony still the house
From cellar to attic rings the shrill
Squeak of the hungry mouse.

Ann scarce can hear or breathe, so fast
Her pent-up heart doth beat,
When, faint along the corridor,
Falleth the sound of feet :—

Sounds lighter than silk slippers make
Upon a ballroom floor, when sweet
Violin and 'cello wake
Music for twirling feet.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

O ! in an old unfriendly house,
What shapes may not conceal
Their faces in the open day,
At night abroad to steal ?

Even her taper seems with fear
To languish small and blue ;
Far in the woods the winter wind
Runs whistling through.

A dreadful cold plucks at each hair,
Her mouth is stretched to cry,
But sudden, with a gush of joy,
It narrows to a sigh.

It is a wilding child which comes
Soft through the corridor,
Singing an old forgotten song,
This ancient burden bore :—

THE PHANTOM

‘ Thorn, thorn, I wis,
And roses twain,
 A red rose and a white ;
Stoop in the blossom, bee, and kiss
 A lonely child good-night.

‘ Swim fish, sing bird,
And sigh again,
 I that am lost am lone,
Bee in the blossom never stirred
 Locks hid beneath a stone !’—

Her eye was of the azure fire
 That hovers in wintry flame ;
Her raiment wild and yellow as furze
 That spouteth out the same ;

And in her hand she bore no flower,
 But on her head a wreath
Of faded flag-flowers that did yet
 Smell sweetly after death. . . .

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Gloomy with night the corridor
Is now that she is gone,
Albeit this solitary child
No longer seems alone.

Fast though her taper dwindles down,
Heavy and thick the tome,
A beauty beyond fear to dim
Haunts now her alien home.

Ghosts in this world, malignant, grim,
Vex many a wood and glen,
And house and pool—the unquiet ghosts
Of dead and restless men.

But in her grannie's house this spirit—
A child as lone as she—
Pining for love not found on earth,
Ann dreams again to see.

THE PHANTOM

Seated upon her tapestry-stool,
Her fairy-book laid by,
She gazes into the fire, knowing
She has sweet company.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

The scent of bramble fills the air,
Amid her folded sheets she lies,
The gold of evening in her hair,
The blue of morn shut in her eyes.

How many a changing moon hath lit
The unchanging roses of her face !
Her mirror ever broods on it
In silver stillness of the days.

Oft flits the moth on filmy wings
Into his solitary lair ;
Shrill evensong the cricket sings
From some still shadow in her hair.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

In heat, in snow, in wind, in flood,
 She sleeps in lovely loneliness,
Half-folded like an April bud
 On winter-haunted trees.



HAUNTED

From out the wood I watched them shine —
The windows of the haunted house,
Now ruddy as enchanted wine,
Now dark as flittermouse.

There went a thin voice piping airs
Along the grey and crooked walks—
A garden of thistledown and tares,
Bright leaves, and giant stalks.

The twilight rain shone at its gates,
Where long-leaved grass in shadow grew ;
And black in silence to her mates
A voiceless raven flew.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Lichen and moss the lone stones greened,
Green paths led lightly to its door,
Keen from her lair the spider leaned,
And dusk to darkness wore.

Amidst the sedge a whisper ran,
The West shut down a heavy eye,
And like last tapers, few and wan,
The watch-stars kindled in the sky.

THE SUPPER

A wolf he pricks with eyes of fire
Across the night's o'ercrusted snows,
Seeking his prey,
He pads his way
Where Jane benighted goes,
Where Jane benighted goes.

He curdles the bleak air with ire,
Ruffling his hoary raiment through,
And lo ! he sees
Beneath the trees
Where Jane's light footsteps go,
Where Jane's light footsteps go.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

No hound peals thus in wicked joy,
He snaps his muzzle in the snows,
 His five-clawed feet
 Do scamper fleet
Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows,
 Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows.

Now his greed's green doth gaze unseen
On a pure face of wilding rose,
 Her amber eyes
 In fear's surprise
Watch largely as she goes,
 Watch largely as she goes.

Salt wells his hunger in his jaws,
His lust it revels to and fro;
 Yet small beneath
 A soft voice saith,
'Jane shall in safety go,
 Jane shall in safety go.'

THE SUPPER

He lurched as if a fiery lash
Had scourged his hide, and through and
 through,
 His furious eyes
 O'erscanned the skies,
But nearer dared not go,
 But nearer dared not go.

He reared like wild Bucephalus,
His fangs like spears in him uprose,
 Even to the town
 Jane's flitting gown
He grins on as she goes,
 He grins on as she goes.

In fierce lament he howls amain,
He scampers, marvelling in his throes
 What brought him there
 To sup on air,
While Jane unharmèd goes,
 While Jane unharmèd goes.

THE HORN

Hark ! is that a horn I hear,
In cloudland winding sweet—
And bell-like clash of bridle-rein,
And silver-shod light feet ?

Is it the elfin laughter
Of fairies riding faint and high,
Beneath the branches of the moon,
Straying through the starry sky ?

Is it in the globèd dew
Such sweet melodies may fall ?
Wood and valley—all are still,
Hushed the shepherd's call.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Hark ! is that a horn I hear,
In cloudland winding sweet—
And bell-like clash of bridle-rein,
And silver-shod light feet ?

CAPTAIN LEAN

Out of the East a hurricane
Swept down on Captain Lean—
That mariner and gentleman
Will never again be seen.

He sailed his ship against the foes
Of his own country dear,
But now in the trough of the billows
An aimless course doth steer.

Powder was violets to his nostrils,
Sweet the din of the fighting-line,
Now he is flotsam on the seas,
And his bones are bleached with brine.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

The stars move up along the sky,
The moon she shines so bright,
And in that solitude the foam
Sparkles unearthly white.

This is the tomb of Captain Lean,
Would a straiter please his soul ?
I trow he sleeps in peace,
Howsoever the billows roll !

THE PORTRAIT OF A WARRIOR

His brow is seamed with line and scar ;
His cheek is red and dark as wine ;
The fires as of a Northern star
Beneath his cap of sable shine.

His right hand, bared of leathern glove,
Hangs open like an iron gin,
You stoop to see his pulses move,
To hear the blood sweep out and in.

He looks some king, so solitary
In earnest thought he seems to stand,
As if across a lonely sea
He gazed impatient of the land.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Out of the noisy centuries

The foolish and the fearful fade ;

Yet burn unquenched these warrior eyes,

Time hath not dimmed nor death dismayed.



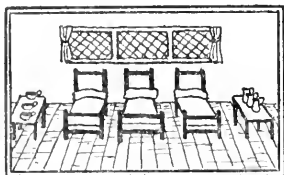
THE ISLE OF LONE

Three dwarfs there were which lived in
an isle,

And the name of that isle was Lone,
And the names of the dwarfs were Alliolyle,
Lallerie, Muziomone.

Their house was small and sweet of the sea,
And pale as the Malmsey wine ;
Their bowls were three, and their beds were
three,
And their nightcaps white were nine.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD



Their beds they were made of the holly-wood,
Their combs of the tortoiseshell,
Three basins of silver in corners there stood,
And three little ewers as well.

Green rushes, green rushes lay thick on the
floor,

For light beamed a gobbet of wax ;
There were three wooden stools for whatever
they wore
On their humpity-dumpity backs.

So each would lie on a plumpy pillow
And watch the moon in the sky—
And hear the parrot scream to the billow,
And the billow roar reply :

THE ISLE OF LONE



Parrots of sapphire and sulphur and amber,
Amethyst, azure and green,
While apes in the palm trees did scramble and
clamber,
Hairy and hungry and lean.

All night long with bubbles a-glisten
The ocean cried under the moon,
Till ape and parrot too sleepy to listen
To sleep and slumber were gone.

Then from three small beds the dark hours'
while

In a house in the Island of Lone
Rose the snoring of Lallerie, Alliolyle,
The snoring of Muziomone.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD



But soon as ever came peep of sun
On coral and feathery tree,
Three night-capped dwarfs to the surf would
run
And soon were a-bob in the sea.

At six they went fishing, at nine to snare
Young foxes in the dells,
At noon in the shade on sweet fruits did fare,
And blew in their twisted shells.

THE ISLE OF LONE



Dark was the sea they gambolled in,
And thick with silver fish,
Dark as green glass blown clear and thin
To be a monarch's dish.

They sate to sup in a jasmine bower,
Lit pale with flies of fire,
Their bowls the hue of the iris-flower,
And lemon their attire.

Sweet wine in little cups they sipped,
And golden honeycomb
Into their bowls of cream they dipped,
Whipt light and white as foam.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD



Now Alliolyle where the sand-flower blows
Taught three old apes to sing—
Taught three old apes to dance on their toes
And caper around in a ring.

They yelled them hoarse and they croaked
them sweet,
They twirled them about and around,
To the noise of their voices they danced with
their feet,
They stamped with their feet on the ground.

THE ISLE OF LONE



But down to the shore skipped Lallerie,
His parrot on his thumb,
And the twain they scritch'd in mockery,
While the dancers go and come.

So, alas ! in the evening, rosy and still,
Light-haired Lallerie
Bitterly quarrelled with Alliolyle
By the yellow-sanded sea.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD



The rising moon swam sweet and large
Before their furious eyes,
And they rolled and rolled to the coral marge
Where the surf for ever cries.

Too late, too late, comes Muziomone :
Clear in the clear green sea
Alliolyle lies not alone,
But clasped with Lallerie.

He blows on his shell plaintive notes ;
Ape, parraquito, bee
Flock where a shoe on the salt wave floats,—
The shoe of Lallerie.



THE ISLE OF LONE

He fetches nightcaps, one and nine
Grey apes he dowers three,
His house as fair as the Malmsey wine
Seems sad as cypress-tree.

Three bowls he brims with honeycomb
To feast the bumble bees,
Saying, ' O bees, be this your home,
For grief is on the seas ! '

He sate him lone in a coral grot,
At the flowing in of the tide ;
When ebbd the billow, there was not,
Save coral, aught beside.

So hairy apes in three white beds,
And nightcaps, one and nine,
On moonlit pillows lay three heads
Bemused with dwarfish wine.



SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

A tomb of coal, the dirge of bee,
The grey apes' guttural groan
For Alliolyle, for Lallerie,
For thee, O Muziomone !

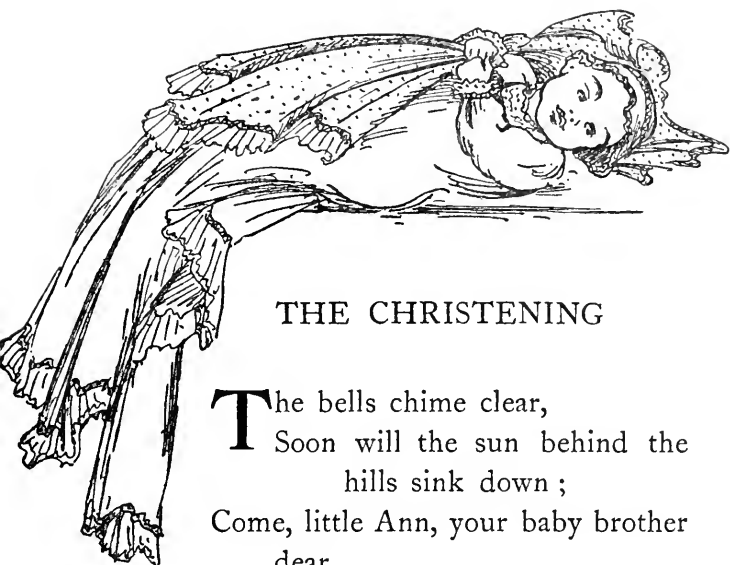


THE RAVEN'S TOMB

‘ **B**uild me my tomb,’ the Raven said,
‘ Within the dark yew-tree,
So in the Autumn yewberries
Sad lamps may burn for me.
Summon the haunted beetle,
From twilight bud and bloom,
To drone a gloomy dirge for me
At dusk above my tomb.
Beseech ye too the glowworm
To rear her cloudy flame,
Where the small flickering bats resort,
Whistling in tears my name.
Let the round dew a whisper make,
Welling on twig and thorn ;
And only the grey cock at night
Call through his silver horn.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

And you, dear sisters, don your black
For ever and a day,
To show how true a raven
In his tomb is laid away.'



THE CHRISTENING

The bells chime clear,
Soon will the sun behind the
hills sink down ;
Come, little Ann, your baby brother
dear
Lies in his christening-gown.

His godparents
Are all across the fields stepped on before,
And wait beneath the crumbling monuments,
This side the old church door.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Your mammie dear
Leans frail and lovely on your daddie's arm ;
Watching her chick, 'twixt happiness and fear,
Lest he should come to harm.

All to be blest
Full soon in the clear heavenly water, he
Sleeps on unwitting of it, his little breast
Heaving so tenderly.

I carried you,
My little Ann, long since on this same quest,
And from the painted windows a pale hue
Lit golden on your breast ;

And then you woke,
Chill as the holy water trickled down,
And, weeping, cast the window a strange look,
Half smile, half infant frown.

THE CHRISTENING

I scarce could hear
The shrill larks singing in the green meadows,
'Twas summertide, and, budding far and near,
The hedges thick with rose.

And now you're grown
A little girl, and this same helpless mite
Is come like such another bud half-blown,
Out of the wintry night.

Time flies, time flies !
And yet, bless me ! 'tis little changed am I ;
May Jesu keep from tears those infant eyes,
Be love their lullaby !

THE FUNERAL

They dressed us up in black,
Susan and Tom and me ;
And, walking through the fields
All beautiful to see,
With branches high in the air
And daisy and buttercup,
We heard the lark in the clouds—
In black dressed up.

They took us to the graves,
Susan and Tom and me,
Where the long grasses grow
And the funeral tree :

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

We stood and watched ; and the wind
Came softly out of the sky
And blew in Susan's hair,
As I stood close by.

Back through the fields we came,
Tom and Susan and me,
And we sat in the nursery together,
And had our tea.
And, looking out of the window,
I heard the thrushes sing ;
But Tom fell asleep in his chair.
He was so tired, poor thing.

THE MOTHER BIRD

Through the green twilight of a hedge
I peered, with cheek on the cool leaves
 pressed,
And spied a bird upon a nest :
Two eyes she had beseeching me
Meekly and brave, and her brown breast
Throbbed hot and quick above her heart ;
And then she opened her dagger bill :—
'Twas not a chirp, as sparrows pipe
At break of day ; 'twas not a trill,
As falters through the quiet even ;
But one sharp solitary note,
One desperate, fierce, and vivid cry
Of valiant tears, and hopeless joy,
One passionate note of victory.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Off, like a fool afraid, I sneaked,
Smiling the smile the fool smiles best,
At the mother bird in the secret hedge
Patient upon her lonely nest.



THE CHILD IN THE STORY GOES
TO BED

I prythee, Nurse, come smooth my hair,
And prythee, Nurse, unloose my shoe,
And trimly turn my silken sheet
Upon my quilt of gentle blue.

My pillow sweet of lavender
Smooth with an amiable hand,
And may the dark pass peacefully by
As in the hour-glass droops the sand.

Prepare my cornered manchet sweet,
And in my little crystal cup
Pour out the blithe and flowering mead
That forthwith I may sup.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Withdraw my curtains from the night,
And let the crispèd crescent shine
Upon my eyelids while I sleep,
And soothe me with her beams benign.

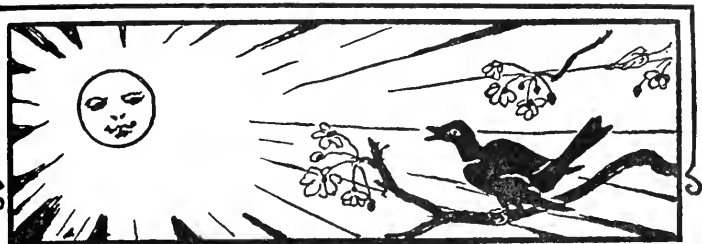
From far-away there streams the singing
Of the mellifluent nightingale,—
Surely if goblins hear her lay,
They shall not o'er my peace prevail.

Now quench my silver lamp, prythee,
And bid the harpers harp that tune
Fairies which haunt the meadowlands
Sing clearly to the stars of June.

And bid them play, though I in dreams
No longer heed their pining strains,
For I would not to silence wake
When slumber o'er my senses wanes.

THE CHILD GOES TO BED

You Angels bright who me defend,
Enshadow me with curvèd wing,
And keep me in the darksome night
Till dawn another day do bring.



THE CHILD IN THE STORY AWAKES

The light of dawn rose on my dreams,
And from afar I seemed to hear
In sleep the mellow blackbird call
Hollow and sweet and clear.

I prythee, Nurse, my casement open,
Wildly the garden peals with singing,
And hooting through the dewy pines
The goblins of the dark are winging.

O listen the droning of the bees,
That in the roses take delight !
And, see, a cloud stays in the blue,
Like an angel still and bright.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

The gentle sky is spread like silk,
And, Nurse, the moon doth languish
there,
As if it were a perfect jewel
In the morning's soft-spun hair.

The greyness of the distant hills
Is silvered in the lucid East,
See, now the sheeny-plumèd cock
Wags haughtily his crest.

' O come you out, O come you out,
Lily, and lavender, and lime ;
The kingcup swings his golden bell,
And plumpy cherries drum the time.



THE CHILD AWAKES

O come you out, O come you out !
Roses, and dew, and mignonette,
The sun is in the steep blue sky,
Sweetly the morning star is set.'



CECIL

Ye little elves, who haunt sweet dells,
Where flowers with the dew commune,
I pray you hush the child, Cecil,
With windlike song.

O little elves, so white she lieth,
Each eyelid gentler than the flow'r
Of the bramble, and her fleecy hair
Like smoke of gold.

O little elves, her hands and feet
The angels muse upon, and God
Hath shut a glimpse of Paradise
In each blue eye.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

O little elves, her tiny body
Like a white flake of snow it is,
Drooping upon the pale green hood
Of the chill snowdrop.

O little elves, with elderflower,
And pimpernel, and the white hawthorn,
Sprinkle the journey of her dreams :
And, little elves,

Call to her magically sweet,
Lest of her very tenderness
She do forsake this rough brown earth
And return to us no more.





THE LAMPLIGHTER

When the light of day declines,
And a swift angel through the sky
Kindles God's tapers clear,
With ashen staff the lamplighter
Passes along the darkling streets
To light our earthly lamps ;

Lest, prowling in the darkness,
The thief should haunt with quiet tread,
Or men on evil errands set ;
Or wayfarers be benighted ;
Or neighbours bent from house to house
Should need a guiding torch.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

He is like a needlewoman,
Who deftly on a sable hem
Stitches in gleaming jewels ;
Or, haply, he is like a hero,
Whose bright deeds on the long journey
Are beacons on our way.

And when in the East comes morning,
And the broad splendour of the sun,
Then, with the tune of little birds
Ringing on high, the lamplighter
Passes by each quiet house,
And he puts out the lamps.

I MET AT EVE

I met at eve the Prince of Sleep,
His was a still and lovely face,
He wandered through a valley steep,
Lovely in a lonely place.

His garb was grey of lavender,
About his brows a poppy-wreath
Burned like dim coals, and everywhere
The air was sweeter for his breath.

His twilight feet no sandals wore,
His eyes shone faint in their own flame,
Fair moths that gloomed his steps before
Seemed letters of his lovely name.

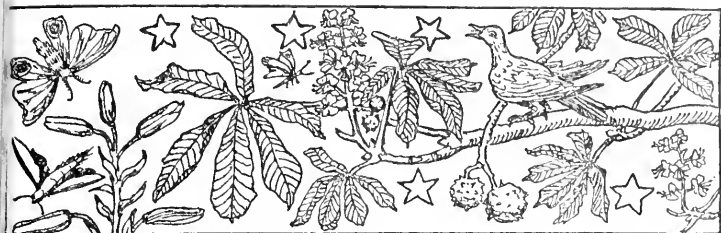
SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

His house is in the mountain ways,
A phantom house of misty walls,
Whose golden flocks at evening graze,
And witch the moon with muffled calls.

Upwelling from his shadowy springs
Sweet waters shake a trembling sound,
There flit the hoot-owl's silent wings,
There hath his web the silkworm wound.

Dark in his pools clear visions lurk,
And rosy, as with morning buds,
Along his dales of broom and birk
Dreams haunt his solitary woods.

I met at eve the Prince of Sleep,
His was a still and lovely face,
He wandered through a valley steep,
Lovely in a lonely place.



LULLABY

Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul !
The singing mouse sings plaintively,
The sweet night-bird in the chesnut-tree—
They sing together, bird and mouse,
In starlight, in darkness, lonely, sweet,
The wild notes and the faint notes meet—
Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul.

Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul !
Amid the lilies floats the moth,
The mole along his galleries goeth
In the dark earth ; the summer moon
Looks like a shepherd through the pane
Seeking his feeble lamb again—
Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul.



SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul !
Time comes to keep night-watch with thee,
Nodding with roses ; and the sea
Saith ' Peace ! Peace ! ' amid his foam.
' O be still ! '
The wind cries up the whispering hill—
Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul.



ENVOY

Child, do you love the flower
Ashine with colour and dew
Lighting its transient hour ?
So I love you.

The lambs in the mead are at play,
'Neath a hurdle the shepherd's asleep,
From height to height of the day
The sunbeams sweep.

Evening will come. And alone
The dreamer the dark will beguile ;
All the world will be gone
For a dream's brief while.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Then I shall be old ; and away :
And you, with sad joy in your eyes,
Will brood over children at play
With as loveful surmise.

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